

# The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

## *On the Summit Track*

IT APPEARS that Presidents Bush and Gorbachev are on track, though a bit shakily, for their summit beginning May 30 in Washington. This is the result of the talks conducted in Moscow last week by their chief diplomatic aides. American officials had publicly speculated that Mr. Gorbachev, beset at home, might not be up to the head-cracking required to formulate suitable summit positions. But regardless of whether these speculations were an artful bargaining ploy or an innocent reflection of gritty Kremlin reality, Mr. Gorbachev appears as determined to proceed as President Bush—conceivably even more so, when you factor in his evident urgent need to make his innovative foreign policy pay off.

The matter hanging most ominously over the Baker-Shevardnadze talks was Lithuania. For Mr. Gorbachev to have continued unchanged his policy of force, threat and pressure would surely have darkened the summit vista. He made a certain adjustment by receiving Lithuania's prime minister, even as the Lithuanians undertook to suspend the particular steps flowing from their declaration of independence. Secretary of State Baker's contribution reflected the American ambivalence: to suggest that the Lithuanians go some distance toward meeting the Soviet condition for dialogue (suspending the declaration itself), but to make plain to Moscow that the United States is committed on a continuing basis

to Lithuania's independence. A formal Soviet-Lithuanian dialogue, of course, would clear the summit air but would not of itself ease the underlying tension. Mr. Gorbachev is caught between fulfilling his promise of democratization and seeing his country fragment, and undercutting that promise and seeing his country explode.

The general question of putting overall Soviet-American relations on a stable basis is still far from resolved. But important specific items of summit business were advanced in Moscow. The difficult cruise-missile knots were untied in the START treaty limiting strategic arms. This treaty is already being dismissed in some quarters as having been overtaken by the breaching of the Berlin Wall, new arms programs and much else. But if its promised numbers and its significance for security look less dazzling than they once did, it remains a feat of negotiation and a platform for further efforts. The treaty on limiting conventional arms in Europe proceeds slowly but this can yet add much confidence to the current exercise of redrawing the map of Europe. Cooperation on curbing production of chemical weapons is reported to be coming along well. All these things together will facilitate the normalizing of East-West economic contacts, which are of special interest to Moscow. Uncertainties persist, but the summit is shaping up as a major event.